

Personnel

AFSOC ORDER OF THE SWORD

— This instruction establishes the AFSOC Order of the Sword. It implements AFD 36-31, *Personal Affairs*. It outlines nomination procedures, the selection process, and induction ceremony preparation information. This publication does not apply to the Air National Guard and United States Air Force Reserve units and members.

1. Introduction.

1.1. Origin. The Order of the Sword is patterned after two orders of chivalry founded during the Middle Ages, both of which are still in existence. The noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps as we know it today was established early in the 12th century. In 1522, King Gustavus the First of Sweden enjoined the noblemen commissioned by him to appoint officers to serve him. Those appointed were the accountants, builders, craftsmen, teachers, scribes, and others responsible for conducting the ordinary daily affairs of the kingdom. The system worked so well that it was incorporated into the Swedish Army as a way to establish and maintain a cohesive, disciplined, well-trained force for protection of lives and property in the kingdom. These ancient NCOs would honor their leader and pledge their loyalty by ceremoniously presenting him with a sword. The sword, a symbol of truth, justice, and power rightfully used, served as a token for all to see and know that here was a "leader among leaders" and a "man among men." This ceremony became known as the "Royal Order of the Sword." It was passed through the ages, coming to America about the time of the Revolutionary War. It lay dormant for many years. The only known instance of its use was in the 1860's when General Robert E. Lee was presented a sword by his command. The "Royal Order of the Sword" ceremony was revised, updated, and adopted by the NCOs of the United States Air Force in 1967. The Order of the Sword is the highest honor and tribute NCOs can bestow upon an individual.

1.2. Objective. AFSOC NCOs established the AFSOC Order of the Sword to recognize and honor individuals, (military senior officers, colonel or above, and civilian equivalents) for conspicuous and significant contributions to the welfare and prestige of the NCO corps and the military establishment.

1.3. Ceremonial Master Sword. The AFSOC senior enlisted advisor (AFSOC/CCC) is the "holder of the master sword." Except during induction ceremonies, the master sword, mounted on a wooden base, will be on display in an appropriate showplace in the headquarters. It also serves as a permanent record of AFSOC Order of the Sword recipients. Each time a person is inducted into the Order of the Sword an individual metal plate (1 1/2" x 3"), with the honoree's grade, first name, middle initial, last name and the date of the induction ceremony, is inscribed and affixed to the wooden base in chronological order.

2. Nomination and Selection Procedures:

2.1. Order of the Sword Committee. The committee serves as the executive agent and is responsible for the development of guidelines, nomination procedures, protocol of the induction ceremony and approves or disapproves any nominations submitted. This committee is chaired by the command senior enlisted advisor. Other committee members are the senior enlisted advisor of the 16th Special Operations Wing, 352d Special Operations Group, and the 353d Special Operations Group.

2.2. Nomination Package. Any NCO(s) within AFSOC may nominate any eligible individual. The nomination package consists of three documents--a cover letter, brief justification, and a biographical sketch.

2.2.1. Cover Letter. The cover letter, simply stating who is being nominated, will be addressed to the wing/group senior enlisted advisor. If a nomination is being made by an individual or an organization assigned to the headquarters or a direct reporting unit, the cover letter will be addressed to the command senior enlisted advisor. The letter must be signed by the person who is submitting the nomination, or the group representative, when an organization is sponsoring the nomination.

2.2.2. Justification Letter/Form. The justification may be typed in narrative format on standard bond paper or in bullet format on AF Form 1206, Nomination for Award. State specific facts (maximum two pages) as to why the nominee is considered worthy of the award. It should be concise, but in sufficient detail to substantiate the nomination.

2.2.3. Biography. Include a copy of the nominee's biographical sketch.

2.3. Indorsement. The senior enlisted advisor must concur with the nomination by indorsing the cover letter, and forwarding the nomination package to AFSOC/CCC. In situations where AFSOC/CCC is the indorsing senior enlisted advisor, he/she will appoint a chief master sergeant to act in that capacity, (i.e., poll a sufficient number of NCOs for a consensus to indorse the nomination before forwarding to the executive committee. AFSOC/CCC will send a copy of the nomination package to each committee member who will be given 30 days to poll the NCOs in their units for a consensus. The executive committee members indorse the cover letter by indicating whether they approve or disapprove the nomination. A unanimous vote by the executive committee is required for approval to induct a nominee. (No person will be nominated who has previously received an Order of the Sword).

2.4. Voting.

2.5. Notification. Once the executive committee approves or disapproves a nomination, AFSOC/CCC notifies the nominating NCO/group of NCOs of the decision by letter. If approved, the AFSOC Order of the Sword planning handout will be attached to the notification letter. The handout consists of detailed instructions for planning and conducting an Order of the Sword ceremony.

3. Invitations.

3.1. Inductee. The inductee's invitation is imprinted and encased in a rich woodgrain container lined with black velvet (illustration in handout). The invitation is affixed to the velvet on the right side in the upper half of the container. The AFSOC crest is superimposed on crossed swords and centered in the lower half.

3.2. Special Guests of the Inductee. The inductee may invite up to 10 special guests. These individuals may be officers, enlisted, or civilians. (The inductee's spouse is invited by the committee and does not count against the special guest list.) Family members, other than the spouse, will count as special guests. If any special guest is senior in grade to the inductee, they will be required to wear civilian formal attire. The purpose of this rule is to ensure the honor and attention remains on the inductee, not the senior ranking officer in attendance.

3.3 Protocol Invitees. The protocol for AFSOC Order of the Sword ceremonies is to invite all former and the current Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) and all major command, field operating agency and direct reporting unit senior enlisted advisors. Because of AFSOC's role in joint special operations, the United States Special Operations Command senior enlisted advisor and the service component advisors will also be invited to honor our inductee; however, they will not serve as ceremony participants. Also invite the 919th Special Operations Wing (AFRES) Senior Enlisted Advisor and 193rd Special Operations Group (ANG) Acting Senior Enlisted Advisor.

3.4. Other Guests and NCOs. The hosting group (that is, the organization whose member nominated the Order of the Sword recipient), in coordination with their senior enlisted advisor, determines the remaining guest list.

4. Ceremony Preparation.

4.1. Publicity. When an Order of the Sword ceremony is scheduled, the hosting group notifies the local base public affairs officer, so that base newspaper coverage may be arranged, to include pictures of the presentation of the invitation to the inductee. The news release should include the facts of the presentation, the nature of the award, and biographical data of the recipient. Publicity materials should be sent to the AFSOC Public Affairs office. If the ceremony is filmed, the host senior enlisted advisor sends a copy to AFSOC/CCC and AFSOC/HO for permanent file. Two 8"-by-10" color photos, and two copies of the recipient's official biography, will be sent to AFSOC/CCC who will maintain one copy and send one to the CMSAF for historical files.

4.2. Funds. An Order of the Sword account will be established at HQ AFSOC. These funds will be available to the Order of the Sword ceremony committee for costs incident to the ceremony. Costs include funds for invitations, place cards, programs and mementos for attendees, the frame scroll, citation and proclamation, the banquet dinner, and gifts presented to the inductee and spouse. However, at the conclusion of the ceremony, funds borrowed from the AFSOC account must be repaid in full. Fundraisers by organizations throughout the command are encouraged to keep individual costs to a minimum.

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